



This document is published at:

Cruz-Palacios, E. (July 29, 2018). National Library of Spain: my Experience as an Intern at Digital Library Service [Blog]. *Libfocus*. Available at:

<https://www.libfocus.com/2018/07/national-library-spain-intern-digital-service.html>



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National Library of Spain: my Experience as an Intern at Digital Library Service

Posted on Sunday, July 29, 2018 by Eduardo de la Cruz Palacios

Every year graduates in Librarianship and Information Science, History, Art History, Philology, Fine Arts, Journalism, Media and Communication Studies, Architecture and Culture Management have the opportunity to join [National Library of Spain](#) (BNE) as interns.



National Library of Spain, entrance. Source: www.bne.es

Marks obtained in bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, courses, previous work experience and specific knowledge are considered in order to choose those who are going to be interns. It is not easy to be taken on at all.

In this post, I will tell my experience as an intern at [Digital Library Service of BNE](#), in which I have been working between october 2017 and july 2018.

Induction and Being Part of a Team

From the very first moment I felt that my colleagues were interested in knowing me in professional terms and making me feel comfortable at workplace.

They explained me the projects in which I was going to take part. What is more, personal taught me everything I needed to cope with a great amount of problems that emerge when managing digital collections and preservation.

BNE organised two guided visits for interns to the two headquarters, namely, *Alcalá de Henares* and *Recoletos*. Besides, I did as many courses for users as I could to learn to use the great range of different collections National Library of Spain has. I attended to two conferences regarding RDA and Digital Edition.

Also, I took part in [2018 Open Doors Day](#) as a volunteer.

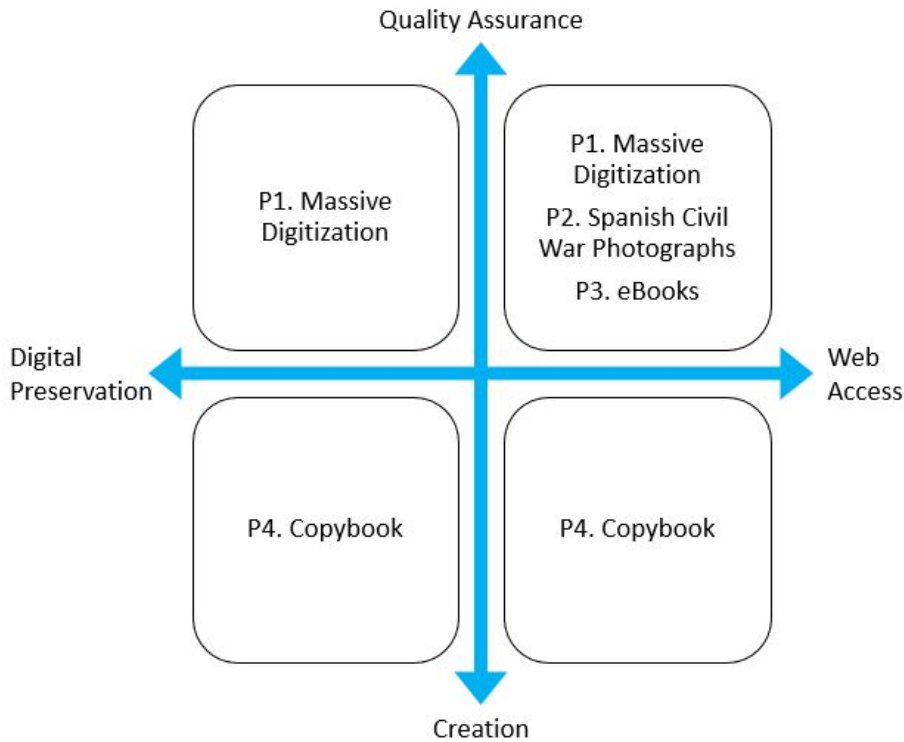
It must be stressed that my high motivation stemmed from my learning process and having considered me as a member of the team by allowing me certain independence and suggesting improvements in work methods.

I strongly think that all I have learned have increased my knowledge and understanding of national libraries as well as the importance of digitization and preservation regarding bibliographic heritage.

Work and Projects

1. Digital Collections and Preservation

In order to explain what I exactly did at BNE, let's consider this graph:



Projects regarding Digital Collections and Preservation at BNE during an internship. Source: Eduardo Cruz-Palacios

Horizontal axis defines where digitized documents are destined: either software preservation or digital collections on the website of [Biblioteca Digital Hispánica](#).

Libsafe for digital

Vertical axis defines the role of personal of Digital Library Service of BNE. When outsources are in charge of digitization, BNE personal deal with quality assurance of what outsources have done. When it is BNE which is in charge of digitization, its personal cope with the creation of files, directories and their structure and naming, and metadata.

P1, P2, P3 and P4 refer to the projects in which I took part.

Therefore, the graph can be read as followed:

- Massive Digitization: the outsourcer was in charge of the creation of the necessary files, directories and their structure and naming, and metadata. I ensured that they met quality requirements before uploading them on *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica* and *Libsafe*. I coped with manuscripts (letters, plays, etc.), maps and atlas, drawings, photographs, old and modern books (novels, essays, etc.), engravings and ephemera.
- Spanish Civil War Photographs: similar to the previous one, but I did not revised digital preservation.
- eBooks (made from manuscripts): I ensured that a set of ebooks created by an outsourcer had the quality required in terms of legibility and accordance with original manuscripts.
- Copybook: there is a scanner at BNE that is used to digitize its collections day by day. After having obtaining digitized pages, I had to generate the necessary files, directories and their structure and naming, and metadata to make these collections available on the website of *Biblioteca Digital*

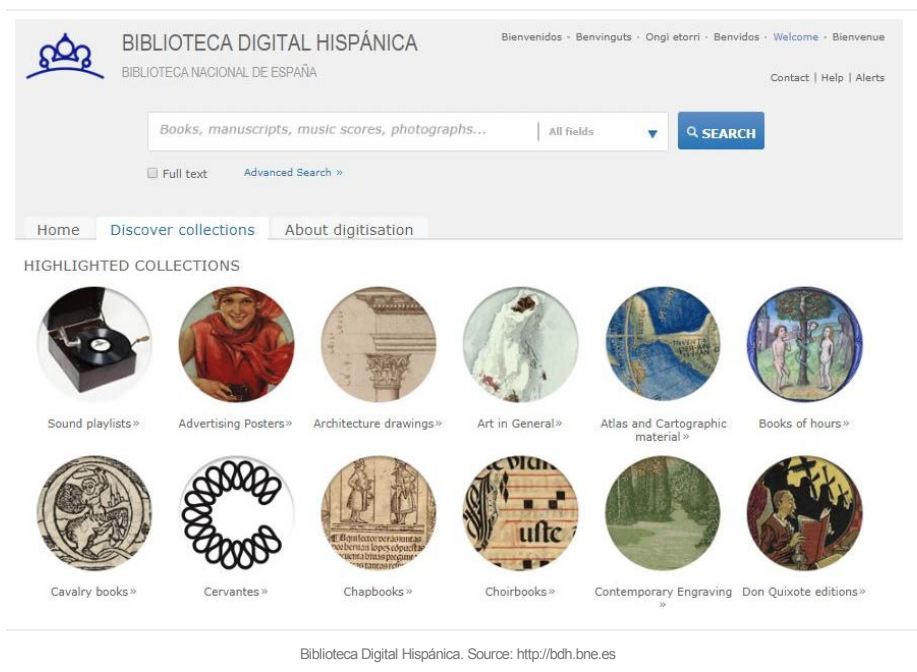
Hispánica and ingest them into the software *Libsafe* for their digital preservation.

Other notes:

- Software for managing the digital library: *Pandora*.
- Files formats destined to *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica*: PDF and JPG.
- Files format destined to *Libsafe*: TIF.
- Metadata: MARCXML for *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica* (METS when multipart documents) and PREMIS for Digital Preservation.
- Company that provides software *Libsafe* for Digital Preservation: Libnova.

2. User Formation

BNE offers seven courses for users that let them know what this library offers and teach them how to make the most of their collections. One of these courses concerns *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica*.



After having offered to give the course of *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica*, the manager of Digital Library Service welcomed the idea and I was allowed to give all the sessions I could.

The course focuses on letting users know all functions of *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica* in terms of information provided (mission of digital collections, process of digitization and webpage of help), how to use [advanced search](#), partnerships with Europeana and World Digital Library, interactive books of manuscripts of [Leonardo da Vinci](#) and [Don Quixote](#), and use of digital collections (navigation, visualization, downloading and publishing).

I proposed to the team the creation of a digital presentation that showed in a visual way all taught in the course of users formation. The team thanked the idea and I created a presentation with the help of one of the assistant librarians. The presentation is now sent by email to the attendants to this course.

3. Records Management

Like any other organization, Digital Library Service of BNE have been generating records as a result of daily work. Recently, it was decided that Records Management System (RMS) *Alfresco* was going to be used by BNE in order to improve coordination between all departments, ensure the preservation of records and provide an unique system of classification.

I had to analyze the records of Digital Library Service of BNE, determine whether they must be preserved and classify them according to the classification scheme of National Library of Spain.

4. Intellectual Property Management

Some months ago, a call was gone out for research groups interested in collections of BNE that have not

been digitized. As long as they are in Public Domain, BNE will digitize them.

What I had to do was to find out whether all proposals of the research groups could be digitized in terms of Intellectual Property according to Spanish law. It involved searching all the documents demanded and comparing dates of authors' death so as to determine a document could be digitized. In the end, 545 [documents](#) out of few more than 1000 are going to be digitized for research groups.

Moreover, as I had to search many times in two catalogs, I proposed the development of a tool that allow the team to automatically extract data for catalogs. After an IT technician developed it, we have observed that what it took 30 hours of work before, it takes now 10 minutes.

5. Research into Digital Collections of National Libraries

In order to make improvements in *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica* in terms of web usability and the efficiency of some work methods, I conducted a research geared to find out how other national libraries were managing certain aspects of their digital collections.

The scope of the research included several national libraries all over the world:

- Library of Congress (US).
- National Library of Australia.
- National Diet Library (Japan).
- British Library.
- National Library of France.
- German National Library.
- Austrian National Library.
- Royal Library of Belgium.
- National and University Library in Zagreb.
- Royal Library (Denmark).
- National Library of Scotland.
- National and University Library of Slovenia.
- National Library of Finland.
- National Library of Wales.
- National Library of Ireland.
- National Library of Portugal.
- National Library of the Czech Republic.
- National Library of Russia.
- National Library of Sweden.

Outcomes are currently being taken into consideration.

6. Search for Digital Collections to be integrated into Biblioteca Digital del Patrimonio Iberoamericano

Not only does Digital Library Service of BNE manages [Biblioteca Digital Hispánica](#), but also [Biblioteca Digital del Patrimonio Iberoamericano](#), which is a website aimed at providing access to the digital collections of national libraries of Ibero-America region.

It is being discussing whether to widen the scope of *Biblioteca Digital del Patrimonio Iberoamericano*, so that digital collections of other non-national libraries would be integrated, such as repositories of college libraries, art galleries, museums, archives, etc.

As the project would demand a great effort and resources, I had to search for possible participants. Aspects like OAI-PMH servers, cataloging formats and the amount of documents were considered.

7. Software Testing and Metadata Creation and Validation

Digital Preservation includes several aspects. BNE plan at this respect is aimed at meeting [Levels of Digital Preservation](#) established by National Digital Stewardship Alliance - Digital Library Federation.

My work placement involved the creation and quality assurance of metadata. Most of tasks are obviously automatized. Otherwise, it would be titanic struggle. Digital Library Service of BNE has a software called *Cran* that can generate and validate metadata as well as checking whether a set of metadata for

digital preservation correspond to the files it is associated. This allows to ensure well-formed metadata, well-structured and well-named files and directories, the correspondence between digital documents and their bibliographic description and integrity of digital files.

Cran software was being updated in order to generate more metadata and increase the efficiency of work procedures for Digital Preservation. Therefore, I had to test the new version in order to ensure new software requirements had been implemented.

8. Work Procedures and Knowledge Management

As I said before, colleagues help me learn from the very first moment. Each member of the team had their notebook with knowledge they need. However, I realized that some work procedures and methods were not documented and available for all the team. Then, I proposed to create some documents to record how to use software (*Adobe Acrobat X Pro*, *Excel*, *Cran*, *Pandora*, *Limb* for digital edition of images, *Fusion* for the creation of METS, *MarcEdit* for the transformation of marc files into MARCXML, *Symphony* as the integrated library system of BNE, and *Directory Lister*) and the processes needed for Digital Preservation and Management of Digital Collections. The idea was welcomed by the managers of Digital Library Service of BNE, so I created several documents at this respect. It has showed to be especially useful for the autonomous learning of new personal.

Interdisciplinary Exchange of Knowledge

National Library of Spain has several departments. Each one is in charge of a specific type of collection: incunables, printed music, manuscripts, films, maps, drawings, engravings, atlas, books, personal records, etc. As a digital librarian, I had to understand the particularity of all these types of documents. It involves understanding what matters in terms of content and continent so that digital collections and preservation plan and management of bibliographic heritage are well-conceived and carried out. No few times I needed the expertise of other librarians specialized in those collections to do well my work. To my mind, as far as patrimonial libraries are concerned, if it were not for non-digital librarians, digital librarians could not work.

Owing to the varied fields in which interns are specialised, I had the opportunity to learn different points of view in terms of understanding what working in a library involves. Needless to say, there is no comparison with studying for years to gain a degree, but the point I am trying to put across has to do with the understanding of the difficulties different specialists had and how we could take advantage of our different knowledge and skills to improve the management of a library.

From the other interns, I could particularly learn from graduates in History, Art History, Philology, Fine Arts and Culture Management. Indeed, thanks to a colleague who was in the Museum of BNE and is specialized in Fine Arts and passionate about museums, I have been starting to be keen to them and learn how both libraries and museums can work collaboratively.
